



HNA schedules meeting July 19

■ Grace medical provider to answer questions about plan

Health Network America, the administrator of a free medical plan offered by W.R. Grace for victims of asbestos-related disease, will hold a meeting for plan members on Friday, July 19.

The meeting, scheduled for 8:30 a.m. at the VFW hall, is being held to present medical information on asbestos and to answer questions about the medical program.

HNA founder and chief executive officer Stephen Kardos will attend the meeting along with vice president for medical affairs Dr. Hay Flynn and nursing director Vi Kauffman. Dr. Eric Garshick of Harvard Medical School and Dr. Paul Scanlon of the Mayo Clinic will also attend. Both are board certified pulmonologists with expertise in asbestosis as well as occupational and environmental health.

Garshick will speak about potential effects of asbestos exposure and dangers of smoking.

Scanlon will discuss the definition of pleural plaque and its

relation to asbestos and asbestosis.

Flynn will provide an update on the Libby medical program pharmacy plan.

HNA has been the target of criticism from local asbestos victims and health care providers following a decision to more strictly enforce eligibility criteria for the medical plan. Some applicants have been denied coverage after being diagnosed with asbestos-related disease by their personal physicians. HNA has also removed a number of medications from a list of prescriptions previously covered by the plan.

The medical plan was instituted by W.R. Grace in January

2000 to provide no-cost coverage for former vermiculite mine workers, their families and other Libby-area residents who may have come in contact with tremolite asbestos fibers that occurred as a contaminate in the vermiculite ore.

Until earlier this year, Grace approved applications for coverage and everyone was admitted, Flynn said at a meeting last month in Libby. In February Grace appointed HNA to audit the program to ensure it is functioning properly and has given the firm responsibility for reviewing applications, he said.

About 750 people are currently enrolled in the plan.

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